DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 326 696 CE 056 527

AUTHOR	Coyle-Williams, Maureen; Wermuth, Tom
TITLE	Boulder Valley Schools Teen Parenting Program: An Exemplary Vocational Education Program Serving a Population with Special Needs.
INSTITUTION	National Center for Research in Vocational Education, Berkeley, CA.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Vocational and Adult Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Oct 90
NOTE	5p.; Produced at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Site of the Technical Assistance for Special Populations Program.
AVAILABLE FROM	Technical Assistance for Special Populations Program, 345 Education Bldg., 1310 South Sixth Street, Champaign, IL 61820.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Collected Works - Serials (022) --
JOURNAL CIT	TASPP Brief; v2 n3 Oct 1990
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Demonstration Programs; *Early Parenthood; *High Risk Students; Models; *Parenthood Education; *Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation; Secondary Education; *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Boulder Valley School District CO

ABSTRACT

The Boulder Valley (Colorado) Teen Parenting Program is designed to meet the educational and vocational needs of pregnant or parenting adolescents. It focuses on the following goals: (1) decreasing the dropout rate of teen parents; (2) improving the health and well-being of children born to teen parents; (3) decreasing repeat pregnancies of teen parents; and (4) increasing the economic self-sufficiency of teen parents. The program is a collaborative effort of the school district, the district's technical education center, community social service agencies, health clinics, and business/community partners. It is staffed with a coordinator, home economics instructor, public health nurse, early childhood education specialist, volunteers, paraprofessional child caregivers, and foster grandparents. During the program, the number of youth served has been rising each year (1981-90). As a result of the program, a high percentage of at-risk youth has been served, dropout rates for teen parents have gone down, there is a decreased incidence of low birthweight babies, and repeat pregnancies have decreased. The program's heavy vocational education emphasis has made it possible for many teen parents to complete vocational training. (KC)

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National Center for Research in Vocational Education

University of California, Berkeley

TASPP BRIEF

Technical Assistance for Special Populations Program

Volume 2 Number 3

ED326696

BOULDER VALLEY SCHOOLS TEEN PARENTING PROGRAM: AN EXEMPLARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM SERVING A POPULATION WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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For the past two decades, federal vocational education legislation has authorized funding for programs and support services designed to enhance participation of students with special needs in secondary and postsecondary vocational education programs. While numerous programming approaches have been attempted, few have been successfully evaluated or carefully examined. Most of the studies of effective vocational education programs serving students with special needs have focused on one group of students (i.e., the disabled). Further, the studies have often been descriptive in nature and have seldom focused on the relationship between program components and student outcomes achieved by program completers.

During 1989, the Technical Assistance for Special Populations Program (TASPP) developed a framework for describing the components of exemplary vocational education programs for students with special needs (Wermuth & Phelps, in press). This framework is providing the structure for the National Recognition Program for Exemplary Vocational Education Programs Serving Special Needs Populations. Through this program, TASPP staff and the TASPP National Task Force are identifying, evaluating, selecting, and describing exemplary vocational programs serving students with special needs. This BRIEF highlights one program which has been identified as exemplary and which should be considered a model for administrators and practitioners to replicate. A monograph providing detailed descriptions of additional exemplary vocational programs identified during 1990 is being developed.

Teenagers and their children across the nation often pay the price for too early parenthood. A high percentage of teen parents drop out of school. Many are poor and have inadequate basic skills. Consequently, large numbers of these youth are ill-equipped to meet the demands of parenthood. In addition, research shows that the children of teen parents are at increased risk for physical, social, emotional, and academic difficulties (Hayes, 1987). While the scope of the nation's teen pregnancy problem is known, most schools have failed to respond (Coyle-Williams, 1989). In response to the needs of teen parents in Boulder, Colorado, The Boulder Valley School District developed the Teen Parenting Program. This program is an exemplary model for districts attempting to address the needs of pregnant and parenting teens.

Located at Fairview High School in Boulder, the program is designed to meet the educational and vocational needs of pregnant or parenting adolescents. Founded and coordinated by Gloria Parmerlee-Greiner and administered by Dr. Lonnie Hart, Executive Director of Adult, Vocational, and Community Education, the program is in its eleventh year of operation. It is designed to accomplish the following goals:

Program Goals

- Decrease the dropout rate of teen parents
- Improve the health and well-being of children born to teen parents
- Decrease repeat pregnancies of teen parents
- Increase the economic self-sufficiency of teen parents

Through these goals, the Teen Parenting Program seeks to *allow all school age parents* the opportunity to participate and continue regular high school courses leading to graduation, and to acquire job skills for economic self-sufficiency. The participation of both teen mothers and teen fathers is encouraged.

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THE IMPACT OF THE BOULDER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT TEEN PARENTING PROGRAM

The Teen Parenting Program has had a positive impact on the health and well-being of an increasing number of teen parents and their children. Since its inception, a total of 359 teen parents, their children, and significant others have been served.

Increases in the Number of Youth Served

Number of Students Served by the Boulder Valley Schools Teen Parenting Program

YEAR	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
Students Served in Program	17	27	33	33	43	37	40	64	65	71

(Boulder Valley Schools Teen Parenting Program, 1989a, 1990)

Risk Youth Served

Among the youth served by the program are a high percentage of individuals considered at risk of academic and economic failure (Parmerlee-Greiner, no date).

- Eighty-five percent of the students and children served by the program have been categorized as "at-risk" according to the 1984 Carl Perkins Act.
- Over 70% of the pregnant/parenting adolescents served have had multiracial/ethnic and/or economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Decreased Dropout Rate Large Percentage of At-

Teen Parenting Program participants significantly increase the likelihood of graduation. While an estimated 50-60% of all adolescent girls who become mothers ever finish high school (Hayes, 1987), the outlook for Boulder's Teen Parenting Program participants is much brighter. Data from end-of-year status reports for the last four years highlight the positive outcomes for teen parent program participants (Boulder Valley Schools Teen Parenting Program, 1987, 1988, 1989b, 1990).

Outcomes for Teen Parent Program Participants

	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Number of Students Served	40	64	65	71
Graduated	7	4	7	14
Pursuing GED	1	3	—	—
Retained in Program	10	26	32	28
Returned to Home School or Technical Education Center	11	5	5	3
Moved out of School District	4	14	13	15
Enrolled in Comprehensive Vocational Program	—	—	1	2
Dropped Out	7(17.5%)	12(18.8%)	7(10.8%)	9(12.7%)

Decreased Incidence of Low Birthweight Babies

In improving the outcomes for at-risk youth, the Teen Parenting Program is also decreasing the risks to the children of teen parents.

- Approximately **10%** of all babies born to Colorado teens are of low birth weight in 1988 (Colorado Governor's Initiative on Teen Pregnancy, 1988).
- Less than **2%** of the babies born to teenage mothers in the Boulder Valley Schools Teen Parenting Program are of low birth weight (Parmerlee-Greiner, no date).

Decreased Incidence of Repeat Pregnancies

Additional evidence of the impact of the teen parent program can be seen in the low incidence of repeat pregnancies.

- About **30%** of births to teens in Colorado are second and third children (Davis, Kercheck, & Schricker, 1986).
- Fewer than **5%** of the teens enrolled in Boulder Valley Schools Teen Parenting Program have had second/or third children while still in their teens (Parmerlee-Greiner, no date).

PROGRAM FEATURES

The facilities and programs run by and through the Teen Parenting Program are made possible through collaborative efforts. Together, the Boulder Valley School District, the district's Technical Education Center, community social service agencies and projects, local health clinics, the local health department, and the Boulder County Private Industry Partnership (PIP) provide a variety of services. The Teen Parent Program is guided by a citizens advisory committee composed of representatives from public and private agencies which contribute to teen parenting services. Services range from early childhood education opportunities for the infants and toddlers of the teen parents, to job placement services for the program participants. Additional program features highlighted include information about comprehensive services and program staff.

Comprehensive Services

VOCATIONAL TRAINING/ EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

- Assessment of vocational interests and abilities
- Pre-employment training
- Job training education
- Employment assistance
- Job placement for part-time and summer jobs
- Work experience opportunities
- Home economics
- Specific vocational instruction in printing trades, machine trades, office support technology, cosmetology, accounting, and health occupations

SUPPORT SERVICES

- Counseling and support service referral for teen mothers, fathers, and their children
- School bus transportation to and from school for teen mothers *and their children*
- Tuition and childcare during summer school
- Substance abuse intervention
- Parent involvement and support
- Infant and toddler nurseries for the children of program participants
- Childcare assistance

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

- Pre- and post-natal services
- Health instruction for positive parenting and pregnancy prevention
- Well baby care
- Instruction in childcare, parenting, and child development in the program's nurseries

PROGRAMMATIC SERVICES

- Open enrollment throughout the school year
- Full access to all high school academic, enrichment, and athletic activities
- Individualized educational planning
- Option of remaining in the program until graduation or until student reaches the 21-year-age limit
- GED preparation option

ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

- Cooperative learning experiences
- Special education, academic assistance, and ESL
- Tutorial assistance from staff, student teachers, interns, high school student assistants, foster grandparents, and volunteers
- Basic skills instruction

Program Staff

The Teen Parent Program staff includes a unique mix of professionals and paraprofessionals from complementary areas of study. The following personnel currently serve the program participants:

Program Coordinator	Coordinates, directs, and supervises all aspects of the program including staff, nurseries, and case management services—1 Full-Time Employee (FTE)
Home Economics Instructor	Provides classroom instruction on the home economics curriculum (Life Management Studies)—.6 FTE
Public Health Nurse	Provides pre- and post-natal services, well baby care, health instruction for positive parenting, and pregnancy prevention education—.3 FTE (Position supported through the Boulder County PIP and grant funding)
Early Childhood Education Specialist	Provides classroom and laboratory instruction on child development and parenting skills—.5 FTE (grant supported position)
Volunteers & Interns	Provide academic assistance in classroom and tutoring sessions as well as assistance in linking program participants with community services
Paraprofessional Childcare Employees	Provide childcare to the children of program participants in the program's three nurseries—up to 4 FTE
Foster Grandparents	Provide volunteer assistance with classroom and nursery activities on a daily basis—2 volunteers

CONCLUSION

The Boulder Valley Schools Teen Parenting Program contains a strong vocational component. Vocational counselors are actively involved in individualized educational planning. Assessment instruments and visits to the assessment center are utilized along with counseling from the Boulder County Private Industry Partnership and Technical Education Center counselors. Vocational counselors frequently conduct interviews, tours of the centers, and try-out activities for all interested teen parents. Teens are encouraged to make both short- and long-term vocational goals. Teen parents enrolled in vocational training are also eligible for supplemental services and vocational resources through the Technical Education Center. Such services make it possible for many students to complete vocational training successfully. As a result of the Boulder Valley School District's strong commitment to vocational education, program participants receive frequent exposure to the merits of vocational skills and training.

For additional information on the Boulder Valley Schools Teen Parenting Program, contact Gloria Parmerlee-Greiner, Program Coordinator, Boulder Valley Public Schools, Fairview High School, 1515 Greenbriar Boulevard, Boulder, CO 80303, 303-447-5346.

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This publication was prepared pursuant to a grant from the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act.

TASPP BRIEF

National Center for Research in Vocational Education
University of California, Berkeley

Developed by:

Technical Assistance for Special Populations Program (TASPP)
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Site

Address all comments, questions, requests for additional copies to:
Dr. Carolyn Maddy-Bernstein, TASPP Director
345 Education Building, 1310 South Sixth Street
Champaign, IL 61820 (217) 333-0807

This BRIEF was prepared by Maureen Coyle-Williams, TASPP Resource Specialist and Tom Wermuth. It is the third in a series of TASPP BRIEFs for 1990. Single copies of this BRIEF and an annotated listing of all references cited in this BRIEF may be obtained by contacting Maureen Coyle-Williams at the above address.

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National Center for Research in Vocational Education
University of California, Berkeley

TASPP
345 Education Building
1310 South Sixth Street
Champaign, IL 61820

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